

JESUS, SON OF GOD.

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REV. F. WARBURTON LEWIS, B.A.

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BY THE
REV. F. WARBURTON LEWIS, B.A.
AUTHOR OF 'THE UNSEEN LIFE.

God hath spoken unto us in His Son.'

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To
S. R. CROCKETT.

‘ My God, I thank Thee, Who hast made
The earth so bright,
So full of splendour and of joy,
Beauty and light ;
So many glorious things are here,
Noble and right.’

PREFACE.

TO understand the life of Jesus, it is not enough to know the events recorded in the Gospels ; we must see the current and the colour of the life ; we must know Jesus. Here, as well as in dogmatics, we must get back to Christ, and it is necessary to go behind the words to the consciousness. It is not sufficient to know that He claimed to be and was Son of God. We must learn what this meant to Him—what was it to Him to be in this world Son of God ?

Then the life of Jesus was natural, lived like ours from day to day, with change and crisis, hope, disappointment, victory, and repulse. We must seek to know His heart, with the thoughts that were the light, and the faith that was the strength, of life. We must trace the connection between the days, for ever renouncing the common, if unexpressed, belief that His life was the acting out of a programme complete in all details from the beginning.

There must also be made evident a connection between the life and the death. Why did Christ live? Men lazily answer: In order to die, and by death to atone for the sin of the world. But is it possible for atonement to be made by a death when the life has only been in order to that death? Is not this as baseless as the moral theories of the Atonement? It is time for the deliverance of the people from the idle thinking that makes the life of Jesus nothing but an acted stage-procession to the cross. Singular above most things is it that all that is needed to shatter the popular conceptions of Christ's life and death is the question: 'What if the Jews had not put Jesus to death?'

In much preaching and theorizing about the Atonement a gulf is made between the Father and the Son. Father and Son are represented as occupying quite different attitudes towards man. In the New Testament it is taught that Father and Son are one; surely never more so than in the salvation of the world.

This volume is a miniature of what should be a Life of Christ, had I the talent and equipment requisite for such a work. But that demands a man who is at once theologian, historian, and novelist. Hence the scarcity of works worthy of the name. Some of these

pages were first written more than five years ago, and with much less labour I might have written a much larger book. I have tried to omit what may be found in the pages of other men, and to make the narrative a unity, revealing Christ living that life which first made God and man one, and showed us what is the life of God and of man. Love I certainly have, but I have often longed for the tongue of angels.

I offer no apology for not making a display of the chips of my workshop, nor for the allusiveness which I prefer to verbosity, and the repression which has cost so much. Scholars will know the reasons for my conclusions in matters of interpretation ; and to others the reasons would be tiresome.

It is expected that the passages indicated at the head of the chapters will be studied before the chapters themselves are read. The Authorised Version has not been referred to or taken into consideration ; and sometimes a literal rendering of the Greek has been adopted.

One note must be appended here. In the days of Christ no one attached to the name Son of God anything like the meaning we give to it. It was then one of the current names of the Messiah, and even Mary and John the Baptist would use it in the popular sense. But I cannot hold, what perhaps Weiss is inclined to teach, that Jesus in the days of the ministry

was dominated by popular conceptions and not successful in rising above them. He made little use of the name in speech, because its popular signification was Messianic, and the popular Messianic conceptions and expectation were erroneous. What it meant for Him, not what it means for the old dogmatics—what it meant for Him while in Galilee and Jerusalem, travelling from Jordan to Calvary, it is the object of this book in part to show. And what it meant for Him, it means for us, in so far as we are His brethren. Jesus showed man how to live, by what faith and with what purpose.

Finally, what I have not written I have not written: I deny the interpretation of my silence.

MONTGOMERY,
June 30, 1897.

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JESUS, SON OF GOD.

THE DAWN OF DAY.

‘Thou art My beloved Son ; in Thee I am well pleased.’

THE Baptism of Jesus is to us an oft-told tale, and the words that fell from the opened heaven are not heard.

But to Jesus that day was one of revelation and wonder. The doors of life were closed and opened. The past slipped away, and the future dawned in strange, new light. The words He heard were not idle words, but words of God to Him, breaking upon His life like the morning on the plains. They were meant for Him, not for the people ; spoken to Him, not to them. And they made a difference to the carpenter.

We must seek to recover the freshness of that day, that all other days of His life may be more clearly seen by us. For out of the

revelation at the Jordan came the light that was His light of life till travelling days were done.

We cannot understand the life of Jesus if we think of Him as unlike ourselves. It is possible so to think of Him as to forget that He had 'emptied Himself,' and had laid aside all the power and knowledge of the 'form of God.' They who lived with Him, and they who were first taught the story of His life, tell us that He was laid a perfect child in Mary's cradle; that He advanced, not only in stature, but also in wisdom, not only in favour with men, but at the same time in favour with God. He day by day got nearer to God. Like ours was that life of struggle, when He was tempted in all points, and offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears; when he learned obedience, the everlasting lesson of common human life, through suffering, and step by step climbed the heights of duty, until He stood at the summit perfected.

Man with God is on the throne. We need a Saviour made like unto us in all things. How can I pray unto God if He knows not the meaning of my temptation? But Jesus has been compassed with infirmity, has felt the

arms of the tempter, has poured out prayers with tears, has known what it is to struggle upwards painfully, and to stand in the wilderness alone. He has not forgotten. Man's weakness and sorrow and pain have been raised to the heart of God. Wherefore we hold fast our confession, for we have a High Priest that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and at the throne of God we are understood. Amid our infirmities Jesus obeyed even unto death, achieved a perfect victory, and thus became the author of a like salvation to all that likewise obey. It is this life of obedience and victory that we would understand.

His life was like ours: event came out of, and gave birth to, event. To-day was born of yesterday and gives birth to to-morrow. The day of the Baptism dawned out of the past and opened up the future. It was a link in the chain of life, meaningless alone. The scene at the Jordan was not a display for effect, but a necessary and natural event in the life of Jesus, coming out of what had gone before, the cause of all that followed.

Jesus was brought up in one of the sanc-

tuaries of Israel. At Jerusalem religion had long been dead, but amid the cottage homes of Galilee there were temples of the living God. In Mary's house the words and thoughts of the prophets still burned and breathed, the prayers of the Psalmists still lifted the heart to the Lord. Here Jesus learned to pray at her knee, listened to God's words to Israel of old, felt the passion of the saints of God that swelled and surged in the Scriptures of His people. Day by day His life advanced, yet always in wisdom and in favour with God. To walk humbly with His God seemed natural to Him, as we have seen it with other pure-hearted lads. He loved best to think of God as Father, and, with a child's thought, felt the temple to be peculiarly His Father's house. In His daily work and play temptation tried Him, only to leave Him stronger for the wrestling. When Joseph died Jesus took his place, and then care became known to Him. Mary's eldest son must support her and hers. So He learned the strain of business, the daily care and fret of home. And He advanced in stature and in favour with men. No man complained of work done by the young carpenter, and Mary never complained of her son.

Years passed away, and no change came.

Yet the heart of the carpenter sometimes grew wistful. Was He ever to remain a village carpenter? If so, He prayed that He might have patience to abide in His lot and be faithful; He prayed that above all His mother might never find Him wanting. But if this were so, what was the meaning of the aspirations and longings of His heart for other work? Was there no other purpose in His life?

At times, especially in youth, we wait for the purpose of our life to be shown. What are we? Why are we? What may our work be? Aspirations move in our hearts; ambition keeps us restless; we are not at home; questions go with us through the months. We wonder if God has a place for us, and if we shall find it, or go astray. Then the day comes, the door opens, and we step into our place, breathing strangely for the first time in our native air. Or the day does not come.

For three hundred years the prophets had been silent, but their words burned in the heart of Jesus as He bent over His daily task, and He felt that He could perhaps speak some word for God that would again move men. But no call came, and He stayed where duty bade Him stay, and day by day He strove to fulfil

all righteousness. Memorable above most things is this.

Stronger within Him grew the righteousness that was never sullied or weakened by defeat ; He saw Himself conquering where other men fell ; His knowledge of the life of God within His heart grew clearer, and shed strange light on the world of men. Was this strength and wisdom never to be used on a wider field ? He could not tell. The questions remained questions, though His heart was often moved within Him as His strength laid hold of the future. And He knew that unless the heavens open 'it is best for us to remain in our lot until the end of the days.'

Days dawn in our life when we take up our work to carry it on towards fulfilment, and find at nightfall that all is changed, that all things have become new. We thought we were weaving the threads of life alone, and saw not the invisible hands. On such a day the pattern is revealed, and we take up new threads on the morrow.

Through the years Jesus has day by day met and fulfilled the demands of duty ; for Him the trivial round and common task have furnished a road to lead Him daily nearer God. The

time of life has come to Him when men are expected to make some public profession, to take some acknowledged place in the community. And the whole land is being moved mightily by Elizabeth's son, whose voice is calling men from sin unto repentance and righteousness. It behoves Jesus to take His place among them and publicly avow that He for His part cannot but stand on the side of righteousness, for even a village workman is seen and known of men, and the cause of God has claims upon the humblest. In the privacy of home and lowly work He has humbly walked with His God thus far : now He would offer Himself in consecration to God on the altar John has reared.

He leaves His work to take His place at the riverside, not knowing that He will never return to His trade. He is carrying on His life this day to one of its fulfilments ; before nightfall He will find all changed.

He goes down to the Jordan, to the prophet of Jehovah, that He may in the eyes of men take His stand on the side of God. Looking back on the years, He can see no sin to be confessed, nothing left undone that He could have done, but only victory after victory often marked by God alone. Now He would publicly

renounce in the baptismal waters the sin He has always renounced and rejected in spirit and deed; before the world He would consecrate Himself to the righteousness He has ever been faithful to in heart and work.

He gathers up His life, such as He has made it, and devotes Himself in sacrifice for the future. The offering of thirty stainless years, years without blemish, is laid by man on the altar of God. He would fulfil all righteousness. He has done His part. Thus far it is finished.

Now it is the part of God, and the hour of God. The invisible hands draw back the veil, and the mystery hidden through the years is made known. The fire of God's acceptance descends. The light of Heaven bathes His spirit, and He knows that God is speaking at last: 'Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.'

The laurel-wreath of heaven lies on the brow of man, and a life of thirty years in a village home has gained the highest praise of God.

The questions of the years are answered: He knows Himself and His work. The revelation has been made; the pattern is seen in its whole design; the doors are opened; He has come to Himself and His Father. He

came down a simple village workman; He goes away knowing Himself to be the Son of God and the Messiah of Israel.

The words that came from God were not idle words. Truly they made a difference to the carpenter.

We have followed Jesus to the supreme hour when all things became new. All that it meant to Him we may not attempt to say. Its full-flooding emotion is known to His heart alone. But some of its meaning we shall see as we continue to follow, for out of that hour came His after-life. On the morrow He took up new threads, and exchanged the work of the carpenter for that of the Messiah. Will He change too? or will He that has been faithful over small things be faithful over great things? Will the Father still be well pleased with Him? The great drama has begun, and the angels of God bend to watch.

MORNING CLOUD.

‘If Thou art Son of God.’

THE history of the conflict in the wilderness was put into its present picturesque form by Jesus, that He might convey to His disciples some impression of the great spiritual contest. We must seek for the inner meaning, believing that the temptation, though it resulted not in sin, was intensely real and not a sham fight. There had been fighting before, but nothing like this. This was the opening of the long battle that only closed with His death.

The Temptation was as natural in the life of Jesus as the events at the Jordan. It came out of what had gone before, and gave birth to what followed. It also was a link in the indissoluble chain of life. And, to be understood, it must be viewed as the sequel to the Baptism : ‘*Then* was Jesus led into the wilderness to be tempted.’

The highest moments of religious experience are often followed by the lowest : brightest hours on the mount lead to darkest in the valley. The contrast between the light and the darkness, between our buoyancy and our weariness, forms the vantage-ground of the Tempter.

And, after hours of revelation when God has spoken to us, we long for solitude, where the words of man may not disturb us as we seek to grasp the meaning of the new truth that has reached us like a dawn from the mountains of the eternal.

Jesus has been moved to the depths of thought and feeling by the words that have told Him who He is, and what His work must therefore be. Out of the long silence the voice of God has come claiming Him as Son ; and to be Son of God is to be Israel's Messiah, and to have Messiah's work to do. Henceforth He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He must be alone that He may have time for thought ; that He may realize all that is meant by this ; that He may gain possession of Himself, and fix the methods of His future work. Forgetful of His carpentry, He wanders into the wilderness, where there is little to eat but locusts and wild honey. There He grapples with the problem of Himself and His future.

The days lengthen into weeks almost without notice, though not without effect. Strength cannot be long sustained in such circumstances; and waning strength takes the brightness from the spirit and courage from the heart. Long and intense thought take virtue out of Him, and at length He finds Himself weakened and worn in body and mind.

And the scene has changed since the day of the opening heaven, when the voice of God gave strong assurance. Is that assurance possible now? How far away that day seems! Was it real, or a fancy, or a dream? Son of God is He, thus weak, worn and depressed, hungry and alone? Where are the tokens of the good pleasure of the Father? Can He be Son of God? and is it possible that He should do Messiah's work? Does He feel like Son of God? If only God would speak again—would draw the veil once more, and give assurance. 'But there need be no doubt about the matter. If you are Son of God, you can make these stones bread; if you are not, you cannot. Try and see.'

It was quite natural. After the revelation, when the heavens had closed and the clouds gathered, in the hour of weariness and weakness, there came the temptation to call in question that revelation of a bygone day—the

temptation to doubt His Sonship, to prove it, and so be untrue to it. What is true in our highest moments does not seem to be true in our lowest. To believe when He stood by the side of John, in the light of heaven, face to face with God, was perhaps easy ; to believe the same in weakness, pain, and loneliness, when everything seemed to whisper 'if,' would demand supreme faith, such as was not found in Israel. That doubt was thrust upon Him from every side, and all things called upon Him to live by sight and not by faith. The proof lay to His hand—why trust to faith? If He can prove that He is Son of God, why be content with merely believing that He is?

The suggestion was one of awful peril and Satanic ingenuity. Had He tried the proof He would have failed—the stones would have remained stones ; for it would have been against the commandment of God, and in seeking to prove His Sonship, he would have disproved it by disobedience ; devils would have trampled the pearl beneath their feet, and black doubt would have surged through His heart.

This the angels knew as they bent forward, yearning to fly to His aid.

But with Jesus the victory of faith is quick and complete. He casts back the doubt, rejects

the test, and holds fast His belief in Himself as Son of God. It has been revealed to Him that He is Son, and yet that it is the will of His Father that He should live a human life, in all points like unto His brethren; the law and limitation of that life He refuses to transgress, though they seem to give the lie to His Sonship; nor will He, with all appearances against Him, be false to that Sonship by doubt or disobedience. He is Son, and must obey; He is man, and must live by faith. He will live by the word of His Father telling Him that He is Son, and in the darkness and weakness of human life He will maintain His Sonship to that Father. 'I will prove my Sonship only by My trust and obedience. The perfect son is he who perfectly obeys his father. I will prove My Sonship, not by making stones bread, but by fulfilling My Father's will. This shall be My meat and My drink—the Son can only live by listening for and obeying every word that proceeds out of the Father's mouth. He has told Me I am His Son: He has bidden Me live a perfect human life. By those words must I live. And obedience is the way of life for man. Along the pathway of faith and obedience I must perfect My manhood and My Sonship.'

Jesus marks out the way of life for man. That way He must walk unto the end, living out the Incarnation, until Man with God is on the throne, and it is proved that for Man and God life is one, the same for Father and for Son. But even now the angels of God lean back with infinite relief, and the gates of Hades tremble, foreboding ill. Man has said He will not live by bread alone. Paradise is regained.

In that hour of solitude, when no one in the land knew Him for what He was, when the devil whispered 'if,' Jesus remained in sure possession of Himself and God's word to Him. But had He failed to believe in Himself, thenceforth had no man believed in Him. Through the centuries men have been called to believe that Jesus was the Son of God; but the first that had to make that belief His own was Jesus. His first victory in the wilderness was a victory of supreme faith—of faith in Himself, of faith traversing the verdict of sense, and holding by the word God had spoken to Him. He thought that heaven and earth might pass away, but the Word of God would remain eternal, and that the victory that overcometh the world is faith.

The Tempter was defeated, but knew it not.

The remainder of the Temptation is an anti-climax.

The thoughts of Jesus turn to the future, to the problem of doing the work of the Messiah. 'But that is easily settled. If you are Son of God, there is nothing to fear, for no one can resist you, and you cannot suffer harm. There is no danger—fling yourself on the battalions of your foes—the angels of God have charge concerning you. You are Son: assert yourself.'

It was the temptation to presume. 'Very well,' said the Tempter; 'if you have made up your mind that you are Son, act on your principles: act as if you believed in your Father's care.' But Jesus thought that a son has duties towards a father, and must live by his word, and not presume on his affection. His Father would have Him to be filial, and a son must needs learn obedience. He would obey His Father's command to live a human life, under the laws of that life, and would not presume on His Sonship to transgress that command in recklessness. The Father's love was a ground for obedience, not for lawless presumption.

The human life of Jesus was the expression of His Divine Sonship; it was His obedience,

and, as we shall see later, it was likeness unto His Father.

The work that Jesus sees before Him is the establishment of the kingdom of God. For weeks in the wilderness He ponders the nature of that kingdom, taking in review the ideas of it held by the various parties of His nation. Quietly and resolutely He rejects the orthodox doctrines and popular schemes of the day. For years He has been dissatisfied with them, and when the moment of final decision comes, He turns finally from them, and develops the thoughts that have been growing within His own mind. It should be a kingdom of righteousness, and the King should be a Father. Out of new clay He moulds a new ideal, which He must go carve in the marble real.

As the beauty of the kingdom glows before Him, His love for His people prompts the longing that the day of God might speedily come for them. Surely all haste must be made that His people and the peoples of the earth may be brought into its light. If only He could win the power, then would He establish the reign of righteousness far and near. And the strength of perfect manhood within Him

tells that there is no one on earth who could resist Him. Let Him arise, power will be His, and His enemies be scattered. Then He will be able——

But He tells the Tempter that we may not do evil that good may come, and that only by service of the Lord our God can His kingdom be brought in. In the wilderness He chooses His methods of work. He will establish the kingdom by obeying the laws of that kingdom, and, unhasting, unresting, He will do only the will of His Father in heaven. Good will He not seek through evil, nor divine ends through laws of a lower world. To this service alone all His powers shall be given.

Jesus has met and answered the problems of His life and work, as far as they can be in thought. He has taken to Himself the revelation and will of God; now He can face the world, knowing His work, and at peace with His Father and His own heart.

He has met His foe for the first time in dread conflict. They will meet again, but in every contest Jesus will be the stronger for this victory, which will be like a shield in the day of battle.

It is from this point that we can best see

His life, which is henceforth the working out of the thoughts of these forty days. The devil departed from Him only for a season, until a more convenient season. The temptations returned—the same temptations, for there were no more: the devil had ‘completed every temptation.’ Jesus resisted them in the silent wilderness of thought. Will He resist them amid the crush of daily life and under the sting of suffering?

From this point we can also best see the life of every man. Here we stand at the crossing of the ways, and the roads of life that men take lie straight before us.

Jesus was in all points tempted like as we are, for there is but one temptation. Varied though temptations seem, they all are part of the one great temptation to be untrue to our Sonship, by doubt, forgetfulness, denial, presumption, disloyalty.

The prodigal has taken yonder highroad into a far country, has forgotten and is denying his sonship. When he comes to himself he will go to his father. This is the story of all the prodigals.

But the same temptation comes to those who do not wander, but dwell in the home

country. It came to Jesus all through life. The name of Father is not always hallowed in our life; the name we bear is often stained and the spirit of sonship often wronged.

We will not speak of the days when the noise of battle stirs our blood, for then we are alert, strong, and conquer. The days to be most feared are not the battle days, nor the days when sorrow strikes the heart. The deadliest days of life are the dreary days, when monotony and commonplace stretch from dawn to dark, from month to month. This colourless, limited life, with the trivial round and the common task, this long, flat, dusty road—can this lead me nearer God? The days are all alike, and there is no heroism in the years—is this the life of a son of God? In the wilderness, when we are alone, weak through the hunger of the spirit, with only fading memories of hours of light and fellowship, comes the Tempter and asks us if we think ourselves sons of God—sons, with never a fatted calf, no music and no dance, nothing but the gray fields from sunrise to sundown? And it seems that we are not; our life is too small, too trivial; we may as well give up effort, for nothing really matters, and we and our life are

nothing, to all appearance vanity and feeding upon wind.

It is then, in the hour of doubt that leads to denial, or in the hour of forgetfulness, that faith alone can save us. We must not, dare not, live by sight. Things are not—we are not what we seem. We must believe in ourselves, believe that we are what God has told us we are, and by that word live on. The thoughts of men concerning us are nought; our own thoughts are often of like value; only the thoughts of God about us avail. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith; and the gates of Hades tremble when a man determines to live by faith in God's word to him. And if we have heard our Father speak and claim us, we can follow Jesus through the dreary desert, through the crush of life, and through the valley of deep darkness. In every day there will be a light that never was on sea or land. God is the sun of our life, and the Eternal Love our home. Now, amid the trivial round and common task—now, when trudging step by step along the dusty road that seems endless and straight—'now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be.' The hairs of our head are numbered, and we dwell now in one of

the many abiding-places of our Father's house. And when most weary we recall the words of the Tempted: 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' Even as He was, so are we in the world.

Being children of God, we must ever pray to be kept from presumptuous sins; only so can we hold our sonship true. And the sons of the Highest are of too royal blood to bow the knee at any name under Heaven.

Our Father is mindful of His own; the angels of God receive charge concerning them, and minister unto us at our need.

AT THE ZENITH.

JOHN VI.

JESUS goes forth into the world in full consciousness and self-possession, to found in that world His kingdom, and first among His own people. The Son of David knows himself to be royal, more royal than David, Son of Jehovah Who reigned over Israel before Saul. To make that kingdom of the God of Israel a fact on earth is His appointed work.

He comes to a people full of expectancy and eager to offer Him a crown. For centuries they have been awaiting the Messiah. And this people is the object of His desire, His task to make Himself their king. King and people are waiting and asking for each other. He has but to deliver them from the Roman bondage, open the gates of prosperity, and they will be His loyal subjects to the end. This way the road is clear to the winning of the kingdoms

of the world. And as miracle follows miracle the Roman legions lose their terror, and the desert promises to blossom as the rose. To win this people seems easy for this royal man.

Here temptation is ever meeting Him. Surely, if He can but win the crown, He will then best be able to set up the righteousness of God in the land. Through the gate of prosperity He may lead them into the garden of holiness. That way they are ready and eager to follow Him. But that is not for Him the way of God.

The expectancy of the people becomes His greatest hindrance, because their idea of the kingdom of God differs altogether from His. So He afterwards bids His disciples tell no man that He is the Messiah. His kingdom is to be one of righteousness—of righteousness first and prosperity afterwards. The garden of Eden can only be re-entered by the gate of obedience. No one can enter the kingdom of God who does not seek it first; to seek for the prosperity of the kingdom, for one's own welfare in it, is to miss the kingdom. They must give themselves for the kingdom, to the kingdom, or the kingdom cannot be given to them. The kingdom He would found is to be above

all a realm where selfishness is not known, where the citizen lives, not for his own place and position, but for the kingdom and the king.

He gives Himself to teaching that He may lead the people into this truth. But they are prejudiced, and have made up their minds as to the duty of the Messiah. To teach is hard, for they are not poor in spirit: they know not their poverty, their ignorance, and so cannot receive the new light of truth—the truth of the kingdom cannot be theirs. Before He can gain good soil for the truth, He must destroy the rank weeds of error. Yes, it is hard to teach.

Will He gain the people? He will not stoop, will He, to their idea of the Messiah? Can He raise them to His?

If He fail with them, He will be in peril, for He has made enemies and is girt by danger. The Pharisees have declared against Him, for He has declared against them. Deadlier still is the hatred of the priests at Jerusalem: they know that if this man succeeds He will take away their 'place,' their standing and their wealth. They saw Him cleanse the outer court of the temple, and know that if power comes into His hands He will cleanse the inner courts too, and that then they will have

to follow the traders. But neither priest nor Pharisee dare lift finger against the prophet so long as the people favour Him. Then on His success with the people depends, not only the fortune of His kingdom, but also His life. If the people leave Him, He will have to fight the priests alone.

Jesus stands before us in quiet strength and calm faith, confronting people on the one hand, priest and Pharisee on the other; refusing to conform to the wish of the multitude; daring the wrath and smiting the sin of the rulers; and at the same time striving to establish His throne, and around it to gather men in the righteousness and peace of God. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!'

His fame grows, and with it the wrath of His enemies. It must soon be decided whether the nation will have Him as Messiah or will not. The Baptist has been killed, and men gather round Jesus in larger crowds amid intense suppressed excitement. He answers the call, not by heading an insurrection against Herod, but by putting forth all His powers to teach and lead them to understand Him. So great is the strain that He would withdraw into solitude, only to find that it is too late. A mighty multitude, forgetful of all else, follows

Him, and He knows that the crisis has come. It is the fateful time of Passover.

At last the great preacher makes His supreme effort. All day He holds that vast audience spellbound, as He shows them again the kingdom He would found, and the king He would be. Never had He so spoken, so striven to speak. Never, if He fail, will He so speak again. Silent, intent, rapt, they listen; at the close—they are silent: there is no response.

He has failed. A strange coldness, as of death, touches His spirit. A preacher sometimes wishes he might never have to speak again.

But they have listened all day, and He cannot send them away hungry. Disappointed, depressed, defeated, alone in the world, not understood even by His chosen followers, well knowing the danger of what He is about to do, He yet turns and bids His disciples feed the multitude. Even now He will see that they do not suffer through listening to Him so long. He will feed them, though they will misinterpret the miracle, as they had failed to understand the teaching, and in the loaves see only a miracle, not a sign pointing to deeper truth.

Knowing what the sequel will be, He sends away His disciples, much against their will, for they have an inkling of what is to happen. But He cannot trust them; they would side with the people, and He will be stronger alone.

The meal over, the men who sat silent and unmoved beneath His wondrous eloquence, blind to the light of truth, rise with a shout and hail Him king. This is the Messiah they want, with a power at His command that can snap the Roman fetters and unlock the doors of wealth.

Are not the priests defeated? Has He not gained the people? But the crown they offer is too poor, too tawdry, for His royal brow; He cannot stoop so low. To be so crowned would be dishonour; the offer is an insult. That crown was presented in the wilderness two years ago, and refused.

No disciple was there to see and record. But that scene was beyond record. Can we imagine the young prophet hailed by those men as Messiah? They are Jews, and in them the suppressed longings of centuries are at last breaking forth; this day the expectation of the ages seems fulfilled. That rush towards Him can have no parallel in history. It is the rush of mighty desires for centuries kept in leash—a

nation long tortured through waiting finds the desire of its heart within reach at last.

But what shall we say of Jesus? Surely to raise the dead were easier than to send away this crowd, carried forward by the passion and desire of the ages. But He does it, and alone. How is not told. As they depart they feel the power of the king. 'A king is a man who can.'

But the priests will win.

This is the only miracle that John has repeated after the Synoptists. He had good reason always for what he included in his Gospel, and here his reason was that his predecessors had failed to indicate the significance of the event. So he rewrote the story that he might add: 'Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again into the mountain Himself alone.'

TOWARDS AFTERNOON.

MATTHEW XVI. 13-28; LUKE IX. 28-36; JOHN VI. 60-71.

WE are within sight of Hermon now ; but if we are to understand what we see there, we must hold fast to our clue that every event in the life of Jesus came out of the past and led on to the future. The Transfiguration needs such explanation more than any other event in His life, and has least received it. If we can see in it the flower of the past and the seed of the future, we may rest content that we have not altogether failed. Failed we certainly have to grasp the meaning of the scene so long as it stands isolated, causeless and without effect.

After dismissing the excited men who would have made Him king, Jesus 'withdrew again into the mountain Himself alone.' The sword is passing right through His heart, and until He has mastered the pain He would have no

man see Him. Nay, there is no man that can see Him as He is, for no one in the land has understood Him. He offered Himself as their king, and they took Him to be a Cæsar. He has spoken as never man spake, and they have trampled His pearls beneath their feet. He longs to give Himself and all His powers in their service, and they would make Him the slave of their passions. O Galilee, Galilee !

His disciples He has sent away because they would have aided the people. Now in His loneliness He turns to the One Who understands, and withdraws to the mountain that, alone with Him, He may face His failure and learn what His future must be. In the deep thought of those hours the storm-beaten disciples are forgotten. He may think of nothing until through counsel with His Father He has gained again clear sight of the way to the goal of life. That goal is ever the same, but it seems that the way thither must be altered. He must still be king in the kingdom of God : but which is the way to that throne ? Not, it seems, through the favour and choice of Israel. The will of God must be done ; once again that nation has refused to afford place for the doing thereof. Israel has failed to understand its Messiah, and Jesus has refused to bend to

its desire. For Him popularity is over, though the tide may seem to ebb and flow. 'How often would I—but ye would not.'

Towards dawn He descends from the mountain, calm and strong, unchanged in purpose, though all else is changed. His meat and His drink are still the same, but He has been at the crossing of the ways. As the days pass, His disciples perceive that His plan of action is altered. In Capernaum He meets the people He had fed with words of satire and division. Many desert Him, and He leaves the town, never again to make it His home. He seeks solitude, and wanders to parts where He is little known, where He may feed four thousand without the insult of a crown. He is often wrapped in thought about His relation to the people. For the only time in His life He turns to His friends and asks what men think of Him, what men really take Him for. He is yearning to be understood. 'And what think ye?' At last from Peter's impulsive thought there comes the recognition, ample and right: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Out of a full heart, a heart refreshed as by summer rain, He gives Peter thanks. He is known now, and is no longer alone. Sympathy will grow in these faithful

hearts. He has not failed here. When the worst comes, only one will betray Him. The future can be met more hopefully, for here is the seed from which much may grow. These hearts believe in spite of appearance, giving the lie to all that seems; they live not by flesh and blood alone; they are His, and on such foundation He can build His Church. The gates of Hades yet shall fall. In the wilderness He would not bow to evil; at the lakeside He would not bow to the people: now men begin to bow before Him, and in the end all the kingdoms of the world shall be His.

Now at last He can tell them what He has known so surely since that night of prayer on the mountain-side—that the way of life has turned downhill, and that He must die at Jerusalem—that the priests must win. The temptations of those silent days are revealed to us as they culminate in Peter's word of love: 'Be it far from Thee, Lord.' The wounded heart cries out in pain at the caress of Satan's hand. But the answer is the same as of old: Man shall live by the word of God, not by the bread of man.

For a week the gloom deepens in the hearts of the Twelve as the dread thought strikes home. The week goes by without record.

But with Jesus it is a time of growing calm. He is taking the will of God to Himself and laying temptation beneath His feet. In their sorrow the disciples notice not that on His face is a light not seen even there before. They do not catch the meaning of His words, 'Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall find it.' They do not know that He is speaking out of the heart of His own life. He does not bid them deny themselves, and taking up the cross follow Him, until He has taken His cross and begun the journey to the place of crucifixion. They are bidden *follow* Him.

At the end of the week he takes Peter, James and John apart, and on the slopes of Hermon enters again into the fellowship of prayer with the Father. Then at last the spirit transfigures the flesh. This is the blossoming of His life. Even we have seen spirit mould body into loveliest form after long years, clothing it with the visible beauty of holiness. But in Jesus there had been no hindrance, and year by year His life went on unto perfection, and now it was complete. The hour of His kingship has indeed come. He is ready in His royal strength and beauty. But the people are not.

Now, for the first time, a human life has reached its true consummation. Death is not the goal of pure human life. That is the end of sin, and in Jesus could not be. Our departure was meant to be on other wise, and His hour has come. 'What then,' He asked a short while before, feeling the spirit quickening Him, 'what then, if ye should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?' The time for His Ascension has come. The life is complete, yearning to the Father that gave it. Moses and Elijah are here to escort Him. Had they not gone that way before?

We approach to hear them speak of Heaven, and Jesus will speak only of death. Moses and Elijah wist not what to think or say. He refuses to go with them. To go is His right, but once for all that right is renounced. Down yonder the world still lies unsaved, and the kingdom of God is not yet established. There is another way to the throne of God perhaps, through the valley; that way Love points, and He will let all go but that. No man could follow Him to God by way of Hermon, and He will not ascend alone. For their sake He must try the other way, even though He lose His own life. Then, if He ascend out of the earth, He may draw all men unto Himself and God.

He climbed Hermon, not to enter into ecstasy, but to make it, as He had made the riverside, the altar of God. Here He again devotes Himself, giving up His own right to the issue of a perfect life and deliverance from ill, choosing to remain in the darkness for the sake of them that dwell there. He lays aside the crown and takes up the cross. Not on the plains of India, but on the slopes of Hermon was the Great Renunciation made.

It was then, when the sacrifice was made, when He had denied Himself, when He had chosen death on earth instead of life in heaven—it was then that the heavens opened a second time, and God spake: ‘This is My Son, My chosen: hear ye Him.’ Again the life has been laid on God’s altar in its perfection, now in sacrifice as then in consecration; again has the fire of acceptance descended.

Here we learn to know the Son of God. Here some learn to hear Him, and to follow in that obedience which is the only sacrifice. And in them also God is well pleased.

Until the late Passover His fame had grown, and the road of His life had run toward the summit of the hill. But now He refuses to go higher, and resolutely takes the path leading

down to the valley on the other side. To do God's will He came forth, and when that work leads Him toward suffering and death He swerves not : He conquered in the wilderness, He conquers now in the strain of battle. For twelve months He will prove faithful unto death.

EVENING LIGHT AND SHADE.

I.

LUKE XIX. 1—10.

THE months pass in wanderings outside Galilee and journeyings to and from Jerusalem. In this change of abode alone lies His safety. But His foes draw nearer and grow fiercer, and His withdrawal from the city after the Feast of Dedication is a flight. The day is closing in amid the gathering clouds of hate and the chill of dying favour; for the people, unsatisfied by Him, come to distrust Him, and their wonder at His works is passing away.

But at the grave of Lazarus the clouded sun shines forth in the splendours of its setting. At the call of highest friendship Jesus works His greatest deed of power, and for the time it seems that the priests are not, and once again His name is great in the land. Far and

quickly travels the news, waking men to new wonder, drawing together priest and Pharisee in conspiracy to kill.

But they are powerless to touch Him, for His passage through Jericho is like a royal progress. The meaning of His journey is evident to all. Men know that He is going to the Feast, and that now at last the battle between Him and His foes must be decided. Little doubt as to the issue is in their minds as they think of the now famous Bethany lying before. With such power at His command He needs but a little caution, and the victory will be assured. A little humouring, and these men will do for Him all that He bids them. Just a year ago He refused the crown, but now He may retrieve His error. All—His crown, His kingdom, His life—depends on His tact just now. Every heart is beating in excited expectancy as every step takes Him nearer the place of conflict.

Suddenly every voice is hushed, and there passes through the crowd a thrill of surprise, dismay, disgust. He is speaking to Zaccheus, the tax-collector. He is going to dine with him—with the best-hated man in Jericho, the extortioner that no Jew would speak to but in curses, the merchant prince in Roman pay,

though born a Hebrew. Truly the rashest, maddest act this ever done by man. Everything—His crown, His victory, His very life—depends on the favour of these people, and He has touched them in their tenderest points—their pocket and their national pride. ‘The man that can insult us thus can never be our Messiah. Let the priests do unto Him as they will.’ These men will never again be His: they will change the ‘Hosannas’ of the fanatics that saw not the deed into words of death and cries of crucifixion. He has signed His own death-warrant, and given up all to have dinner with a hated man. The priests have won.

Jesus well knew what He was doing. Why, then, did He so act?

It is all inexplicable so long as we think of Zaccheus as like others of his profession. How long he had lived in Jericho we know not; but he had come there, and he lived there, under a bad name which he could not live down. He was a tax-collector, he was rich, he was a Jew; the cup of his iniquity was thought to be full. Yet he was an honest man. It had been his custom to restore fourfold when he found that any injustice had been committed. To live so, under constant tempta-

tion to extortion, and with servants under him who despised his virtue, was a great thing. But he never had a chance of vindicating himself, for no man would believe or even listen to a tax-collector. But now, with Jesus by his side, he has standing-ground, he can speak out, and men must hear. And Jesus makes answer : ' I know thou art an honest man ; that is why I am come to thy house this day ; for, though they have turned thee out of the Church, out of society, out of the nation, thou art a true son of Abraham, and to seek such outcasts is My work.'

Jesus knew Zaccheus to be an honest man living under a bad name. He knew that Zaccheus could never free himself from the stigma. He knew that if He did not wipe off the stain, that name would go stained to the last. He would never pass that way again : it must be done now, or never be done. The path of duty lies clear before Him, and, though it runs so clear and straight to death, He cannot leave that path ; so He does His duty, though He must die for it. Truly this is Son of God.

For the sake of Zaccheus He counted not His life dear unto Him. At the call of duty He hesitated not to act in seeming madness.

In the scales were weighed the good name of Zaccheus and the plaudits of the multitude, and the latter were found wanting. Not to have confessed Zaccheus would have been to be crowned before men, and to have gone unconfessed before the angels of God. So they that do it unto one of the least of His do as He did, and do it unto Him.

11.

JOHN XII. 20—32.

His life had been the life of the Man of Sorrows who was acquainted with the grief of God. The pain of life had smitten Him like other men. He learned what keen disappointment means; He had friends who gave Him pain. He did not escape the loss of those He loved so well, nor the loneliness of those who vainly long but to be understood and loved. His own heart alone knew its own bitterness.

But there was a wider plane than this. As that pure soul passed along the way of life, think you not that the misery and sin of man weighed heavily upon it? To meet sin was to be smitten with pain; to see misery was to feel its burden. Time only added to the

weight: as He came to see in what relation He stood to all this sin and misery—that it could not be removed but by Him, and must ever remain if He failed to take it away—then the world's sin and sorrow fell like a burden on His heart, a burden that would crush man if it crushed Him. He must bear it, but the anguish was deep.

His ministry went on, but grew darker; He strove to deliver men, but failure promised to be His only inheritance; for all His striving sin seemed strong as ever; He came to His own, and they that were His own received Him not; He scattered seed, but the fields remained barren. He came to understand the grief of God.

But across this path of gloom and sadness there fell rays of light and hope. The Jews would not receive Him: here the cup of bitterness was full. But at times a Gentile crossed His path, and then the veil of darkness seemed to lift; from Juda's barren land He looked into the future and saw golden fields of waving corn. These strangers were the firstfruits of a harvest yet to come. Down the long vistas of the future He looked, and then, it may be, saw of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied. So had it been when He met the woman of

Samaria, the Syrophenician woman, the centurion.

Andrew and Philip tell Him that some Greeks wish to see Him. With even clearer vision now He sees the future harvest ; His Jewish ministry is at an end, and from the disappointing labour of the past He can turn to brighter prospects of a grand world-harvest. It is a moment fraught with hope and joy. 'The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.' The time has come when all men should be drawn unto Him. He feels the world yearning towards Him and His power to draw men ; in faith He gathers the sheaves of a great harvest.

But in this moment of triumph His face becomes clouded over ; heavy thoughts pass across that knit brow ; His soul is troubled.

The hour is come, as it came once on Hermon ; now, as then, it must be deferred. The hour of joy is dashed with agony. He has seen the future harvest, but He has also seen all that must go to make that harvest possible. Before there can be reaping there must be sowing. 'Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone.' As on Hermon, His thoughts turn to the decease which He must accomplish. His life must be given away, as is the life of the

seed. Only through sacrifice can harvest come. If the Gentiles are to be His, and all the centuries, then the external wrappings of the Jew, the coverings of the seed, must be thrown off—He must die, His sphere of action must be enlarged, His centre of action be changed; the spiritual nature of His kingdom demands that He enter the spiritual realm, take His seat on the throne of God, and from that commanding height draw all men unto Himself. But in order to do this He must die: exaltation to the throne of God means first exaltation to the cross. There is no other way to the throne for Him. And there is no law of harvest but the law of the grain of wheat. The shadow of the cross falls on what might have been an hour of pure joy and exultation; thus it was that He felt His soul troubled within Him. The clouds that veiled the future never lifted so completely as when He stood beneath the shadow of the cross; but the shadow of the cross stood out all the more darkly because of the light of the future. The distant mountain peaks were flushed with light, but between them and Him there stood the valley of the shadow of death.

But if He is Son of God, why need He be

bound, like a grain of wheat, by the laws of life and death? Why not cancel laws, and attain the end by His power? It is not too late to smite His foes, and call the Gentiles to His side. The angels of God have charge concerning Him. He will be as safe as if He flung Himself from the Temple roof. 'Get thee behind me, Satan. I may not presume. I must obey. They are the laws of My Father, and it is the part of His Son to fulfil them. My only way is the way of human life in obedience to My God.'

The sun is touching the horizon amid lurid clouds of hate and malice. But it lights the eastern hills. What if on the morrow the sun stand above those hills in cloudless splendour?

His face is turned from the sun, and His eyes rest on the lit hills in the east. Soon it will be time to descend into the valley that lies dark before Him. But why not follow the sun, and travel westward with these Greeks? That way safety lies. All the kingdoms of the world are there before Him. Why not leave this sterile soil and —— 'He that loveth his life loseth it.' That way lies the throne of Cæsar, but not the throne of God. From yonder hills, across this dark valley, He must call all men

unto Himself. He would not live over men, but in them : he that liveth over men abideth, in his royal grandeur, by himself alone ; he that liveth in men hath borne much fruit. The seed must die. Man cannot live by bread alone, but perhaps man can live through death by the word of God. By this faith He will live, in this faith He will die.

This way God calls Him, and He cannot be Son unless He trust the Father of life in the darkness. He humbly walks the road God commands, showing Himself Son by His obedience and trust. He has seen the light of the future, but the valley is dark, unknown, and must be trod in faith. Nevertheless, 'let not your heart be troubled ; believe in God.' It is enough for Him to know the law of God that harvest is only through sacrifice, life only through death.

Is not this the law of the Father's life ? Did He not for the sake of harvest give His only Son, His exceeding precious seed ? Was harvest possible to God without sacrifice ? The Son must be like the Father ; the law of His life must be the same.

'Father, it is the hour when I should be glorified. But Thou hast appointed pain to Me for their sake. I pray that Thou wilt save

Me—nay, it was for this that I came thus far. Then I pray not for My own salvation—I care not for My own glory. Father, glorify Thy name—Thy kingdom come—Thy will be done, not Mine.'

On Hermon He chose death from afar—now, when face to face ; then, in the blaze of mid-day ; now, in the shades of coming night. Again the sacrifice is made ; again the heavens open ; again has God's name been glorified, God's highest glory been seen in highest sacrifice on earth.

NIGHTFALL.

LUKE XII. 15-34 ; XXII. 39-46.

JESUS has entered the valley ; the day of work is over, and the night of suffering has come. He is standing where there is no light to guide, and where light is most needed. It is ill for man when he has not gained some light of wisdom and truth that he may take with him into the darkness. Has Jesus learned so well the secret of life that now He need not fail ?

In the garden the flowers He loves lie sleeping at His feet, but while it was day He found the secret of their life, and that secret is with Him in the night. It is a great thing if we learn the meaning and the way of life before we have marred it by wastery and wantonness, by folly and idleness. Jesus spoke as if this had been His achievement, and as if He felt Himself a match for Fate.

He told men not to live like the man who pulled down his barns and built greater. That avails not in Gethsemane. He spoke as if men might live without being anxious for their life. By anxiety they could not increase the growth of their bodies: how much less the growth of their souls! Men must grow to beauty and fulness of life as the lilies grow. He taught that the crime of life is to be anxious for our own salvation; to make that the aim of life is to miss life's end. Above all other things, selfishness is wrong: to fill one's barns, to aim at happiness in this life, is selfishness; to aim at happiness for the next life is only greater selfishness. Our own salvation is not our work, it is the work of God our Saviour.* He clothes and makes beautiful the lilies and the grass; He will clothe His people too, and in the beauty of holiness. It is our part to live according to the laws of life, as the flowers do—to do His will. Our work is to seek His kingdom, not our place in it. James and John sought their place in it; Jesus did not. There have been many in high position or of great name in the 'Church' who have been as far from the kingdom of God as were the sons of Salome, because their aim has been,

* *The Unseen Life*, p. 74 f.

not the glory of God, but their own place and reputation. The deepest selfishness is found among 'religious' people—among men who deny to themselves pleasure, but who never deny themselves. But if a man would be a disciple of Jesus and learn His secret of living, he must first deny his own self, and find something else to live for. He must take his cross, go to the place of death, and be crucified.

With Jesus the duty and purpose of life was to give all to the upbuilding of God's kingdom, to the making God King in His own life and in the lives He touched; and His meat was to do the will of His Father. This is the secret of life He gives us, and from Him we learn to say with Paul: 'I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ (damned) for my brethren's sake.' Then anxiety falls away with selfishness, and the way of life, the doing and getting done of God's will, lies plain before us even through the valley of deep darkness. Men see our good deeds and glorify, not us, but our Father in heaven. All goes to the account of God, and nothing good in us or by us is lost, as no sparrow falls without His notice. We live no longer for self, but to the glory of God. We can live as the lilies live, in God's free open air, sunshine and rain.

Jesus lived so because He had a Father. The ravens and lilies that live according to the law of God are fed and clothed in beauty—if the ravens will work to get their food, and the lilies will receive the winter. So shall God's children be. Jesus drove anxiety for our own life from under the sky when He made this universe our Father's House. Storm and rain, dearth and death may come, but we have a Father, and He knoweth. It is the pleasure of our Father's life to give us the kingdom. After that assurance anxiety as to our salvation is utter unbelief, blacker than all heresy. Yet Christian unbelievers will seek to make stones bread, thinking their Father has forgotten them, unmindful of the angels waiting to minister. But they who live for Him and not for themselves are in their Father's care, and are delivered from the miserable fears that cramp strength and waste life.

The thoughts of Jesus were the thoughts of the Son of God. He lived in His Father's home, and if a room was dark His faith was strong. This trust He found to be the wisdom of life.

Now He enters Gethsemane, and it is night. Hither the way of the will of God has led Him, and He has not faltered yet. But now? Some

say that blood fell with the words, 'Thy will, not Mine, be done.' Thus the Son of God. He learned obedience.

It was wondrous to hear Him speak of the ravens and the lilies, with the fair sky above and the decked grass below. He cannot speak much now. But the thought of the day He makes true in the night. He lays self on the altar, and prays that His own will be not done. He rises calm, knowing that He has a Father. He has chosen His Father's will; He and His Father are one.

How often would He have gathered them, but they would not. And long months before He had chosen the other way, the way of the cross. But that way had grown harder to tread every day; but in Gethsemane the sacrifice is fully made, the suffering of God before the eyes of men finally chosen, with strong crying and tears, agony, and the shedding of blood.

MIDNIGHT.

MATT. XXVII. 39-54.

I.

THE TEMPTATION OF THE CROSS.

‘If Thou art Son of God.’

THE worst has come, the death of infamy and shame. The insult and contumely of men can no further go. He is branded with the deepest curse of man. The priests have won, and here is the proof that all His claims were false. ‘He said, I am Son of God,’ and is dying the death forbidden by the law to be inflicted on the meanest of the people of Jehovah. Yet He claimed to be Messiah. They have succeeded : no one believes in Him now.

As He dies it is easier to bear the pain than those taunts from people and priest :

‘Save Thyself ; if Thou art Son of God, come down from the cross.’

‘He is King of Israel! let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe on Him.’

‘He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He desireth Him; for He said, I am Son of God.’

All appearances are against Him. Clear and plausible seems the argument of the railers: ‘He does not come down from the cross, therefore He cannot be Son of God; He is not the Messiah.’ We shall see that the true reasoning would have been: ‘He is Son of God, therefore He cannot come down from the cross.’

Through His life it was often hard to maintain highest belief in Himself, but all had been easy to this hour. All appearance gives the lie to Him, and He has to bear the taunts in silence—cannot speak a word of reply. The old temptation of the wilderness meets Him again; but the scene is changed. ‘If Thou art Son of God’ was then whispered to His thought in the solitude and silence of the desert; now the whisper has grown to the yell of a nation, at Jerusalem, and in the noon-day. Then was He tempted to doubt His Sonship and to prove it; the taunt of the multitude is the same temptation, but in such force as He had never felt before. Is this, can

this be, God's Son? Is this the end of His claims? He refused to make stones bread for purposes of proof; He now refuses the challenge of the railers to prove His Sonship by descending from the cross. Then the Tempter knew that the refusal was the supreme victory of the faith of Jesus in Himself; now the people take His silence as the last proof of His failure and falsehood. So has the temptation grown: it was not for nought that the devil left Him for a season. It was only until a more convenient season, and never through all the months has there been such a day as this. In the wilderness the devil was alone when He met Jesus; now he has won the nation to his side.

There has never been such temptation as that on the cross. Never were there pretensions and claims so high as those made by Jesus; never was the lie so completely given as to Him. And in that hour the demand was inexorable that He believe Himself to be God's Son, that He live and die as behoved God's Son.

He bears the taunts and the silence, living even now by faith and not by sight; maintains His belief in Himself, alone of men; and stoop to prove His Sonship He cannot, for He will

not doubt it. He is alone, and of the people there is none with Him in this faith.

‘ Yea, with one voice, O world, tho’ thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.”

To the end He would be man, according to the word of His Father. To disobey that word, to seek to break the limitations of human nature, would be to forget and destroy His Sonship. The ‘if’ is answered.

To live thus, trusting the unseen and despising shame, against appearance and by conviction, this is faith. And we learn that to suffer in silence, misunderstood, defamed, yet unable to speak in answer; retaining faith in ourselves when no one believes in us, and maintaining honour with our own souls; this is Divine, the part of the sons of God. Job triumphed so.

II.

LEFT HELPLESS.

The darkness deepens. Tides of pain and grief surge over Him. Loneliness covers Him as a sea. And, for the first time, there is no help from God. ‘ My God, My God, why hast Thou left Me helpless ?’ It is the last hour, and

the worst. He is left to stand alone, and even His Father cannot help. Sin has shut the door of His Father's home. Never before has He been alone, for He has always lived with the Father. The loneliness of Gethsemane was nothing to this bewildering silence. This bitter cup may well quench faith. If He is Son of God, why must God leave Him helpless? Can this be Son of God?

But His cry of pain is very victory. 'My God, why hast Thou—I have not left Thee.' He is conscious of no sin, even in this darkest hour. The heavens may pass away, but His faith in Himself will remain. Left helpless, by His own strength He stands. It is the last death-grapple in the darkness, when Satan with his last strength would pluck His Sonship from the heart of Jesus. The Father cannot help. He hides His face. There is silence in Heaven.

'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.' '*Father*'—it is the Son; He has kept His faith in this moment, when left alone. Now it is finished.

One that said 'Truly this was Son of God' wist not how truly he spake.

Once He played as a lad in the fields of

Nazareth, unconscious of His destiny. And because He sinned not, He has grown to be the Conqueror of Sin, and now goes to conquer the last enemy. He that was faithful in the least things has been faithful unto the end. Because He won in the home days and in the wilderness, He became strong enough to win on the cross. He has fought the good fight, He has finished the course, He has kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for Him the crown, and a name above every name. Through all, and therefore unto the last, He has been the Son in whom the Father is well pleased. In Him the Father was well pleased, more than ever before, when He had to leave Him helpless in the last temptation.

III.

GOD AND SIN.

Jesus could not come down from the cross, and was left helpless by God, because He was Son of God.

Jesus was the Revelation of God ; to reveal God to man was His work in this world. He was the Word of God, and as the word reveals the thought, so He revealed the Father. God

hath spoken unto us in His Son, and therefore hath told us that He is a Father. He that hath seen Jesus hath seen the Father.

To see Jesus meeting men and sin and sorrow is to learn how God bears Himself towards men, sin and sorrow. And never did Jesus so completely reveal God, never did the Son so perfectly image the Father, as on Calvary.

To be a true Son, like unto the Father, in deed and in spirit, was the life-work of Jesus ; never so truly was that His work as in the hour of death. Then, as often before, He met sin, and had to treat sin and sinners as the Father treats them. He had lived against sin as God lives against it. But now it is putting Him to death. Sin has failed to destroy His character ; it will now destroy His life. All this shame, insult, pain, agony and death, is the handiwork of sin. He is suffering under sin. Jesus and Sin have met as never before on earth. How shall He treat it and those in whom it lives ? He may descend and scatter them in His indignation.

No ; He bears it.

He is Son of God, revealing the Father, and on the Cross He reveals God in relation to sin, and sin in relation to God. The wondrous

truth He makes known is this : God does not in anger hurl back sin upon the sinner in destruction ; He bears the sin and forgives the sinner. Jesus only does what He has seen His Father do, and on Calvary He finally makes good His Sonship by suffering, by bearing sin and its pain, by taking all men can do, and giving no answer of wrath. So has He learned of His Father.

The Son must be as the Father, and the Father protects not Himself against the arrows of sin, but in silence buries them in His heart. Then the Son must go unprotected too, and by His broken heart tell to men the story of the Father and His love. Therefore He is left helpless, exposed to Sin's full hate. The servant is not above his lord, nor the son above his father. As they have done unto the Father, so will they do unto the Son ; as the Father suffers, so must the Son who reveals Him. The Father cannot protect Him because He is His heir and must inherit.

We cannot understand the Cross if we think of it alone. We must look beyond. It is profane and it is useless to seek to find in the pain of the dying Jesus the equivalent of the deserved punishment of man. We may not

balance the sin of the centuries by the few hours of that awful day.

But we can understand the Cross if we see that, like all in the life of Jesus, it was a revelation of the Eternal. His suffering was an image of the suffering of God. Jesus bore sin and all its pain, with all its malice, because He was Son of God, the image of the Father; and He thereby told us that this world's sin is borne on the Father's heart. Through the centuries God has borne man's sin; the Father has taken into His heart the arrows winged by the hands of the prodigal; has kissed the penitent, and said nothing of the pain. But He spoke once—in His Son. On Calvary the agony of God was seen for one hour. The heavens opened, and men saw the heart of the Father and the blood of God. The sin of the world is expiated in the suffering of the Eternal. The prodigal is forgiven by the Father Who has borne his sin.

We cannot see how all our sins were borne on the Cross, but we can see how all are borne this day upon the heart of God that Jesus revealed. And we can see how God was in the Son reconciling the world unto Himself.

On the Cross, in the pain, in the solitary suffering, in the exposure to the full power and

malice of Sin, Jesus was one with the Father ; and never so much as when He entered into the dread solitude where God is alone with Sin, and there is none to help.

Sin also was made manifest. We know now that every sin is against a Father, touches Him, and is borne by Him. Shaft after shaft pierces His heart. Not a sparrow falls without our Father : no arrow of sin fails to quiver to its mark. It is sin that makes the son a prodigal, and darkens the home of God. At the Cross we see that sin is what kills God's Son, strikes God's heart with pain, and hushes the songs of Heaven. Can the angels sing as they should while the Father thinks of the son in the far country ? Sin has brought God to the depths of sorrow, and on Calvary the elder brother told of the Father's grief. The Cross is the reflection on earth of the Sorrow of Heaven. But our Father will never say anything more about it. We shall never learn all.

But Calvary is enough : we have seen the God of Sorrow and of Pity, our Saviour and our Father ; we believe in the blood of God and the exceeding sinfulness of sin. We know now that there is no sorrow like unto His sorrow, and all our pain seems lost in His. The

infinite desire of the crucified God lays hold upon our souls, and we are constrained by His passion. With Jesus we would live to Him, sons well pleasing, bringing no pain but only joy to a Father's wounded heart.

Jesus came not down from the cross, that He might do as He had learned of the Father, Who avenged not Himself, but bore and forgave, that He might make known His Father and their sin to men, that He might be acquainted with the grief of God. The reasoning of the railers was wrong: He could not come down because He was Son of God.

And to the sons of God He saith: 'Forgive as ye have been forgiven; bear sin as yours has been borne; fill up what is lacking of My afflictions—they sufficed not to reveal all; your pain is but as a faint echo of your Father's pain.'

And God saith: 'This is My Son, hear ye Him.'

'And I saw in the midst of the throne a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain.'

SUNRISE.

‘Declared with power Son of God according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.’

‘**T**HIS is My Son,’ God had said, but the Son suffered shame and contradiction at the hands of man: Truth was crucified. But Truth cannot be for ever on the scaffold. God speaks again, and at His word the life of holiness that was never marred by sin nor weakened by defeat wakes in power, and Jesus by the resurrection is declared before all the worlds Son of God beyond gainsaying. He that lived in holiness in the shades of the flesh is manifested in the strength and beauty of that holiness in the light of endless life. He lived by the spirit of holiness, consecrated to God—lived not by bread, but by the word of God—a sacrifice on His altar, devoted to His will. By that spirit of holy life He lives again, and in power, for that life was all-victorious over sin

and now is free. He committed His spirit into His Father's hands, and the Father has been mindful of His own.

Men condemned Him, but the verdict of Jerusalem is annulled ; things are not what they seem ; the cross was but the lie of the Prince of Darkness ; the shadows of night pass away, and the sun that knows no setting stands above the eastern hills. In that light of life men shall walk till all be drawn unto the Father. The priests are condemned, Sin is defeated, Death is no more, Jesus of Nazareth is Son of God.

Jesus told us how the prodigal was received on his return ; how was the Elder Brother welcomed after His dread journey and travail ? He came to the Father with promise of great joy, leading home the prodigals. What did it mean to the Father ? We cannot say. There was joy in heaven, and the Father was well pleased.

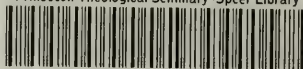
He will be satisfied when we awake in the likeness of His Son. On the cross Jesus was Son of God, yet it was not made manifest what He should be. Now, on the cross, amid the sin, ' now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. But we

know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is.' God shall see of His travail, and be satisfied; there shall be no mourning, nor pain, nor curse, nor sin, any more; the last tear of man and of God shall be wiped away; in His home shall be fulness of joy, gladness and singing; and the Elder Brother, His First-born Son, shall be there.

THE END.

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Jesus, Son of God

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